specific. The measures include delicensing of most of the food processing (except brewing and distillation of alcoholic beverages and those items reserved for small scale industries) and provision of fiscal incentives. The Ministry also operates development Plan Schemes under which financial assistance is provided for the development of food processing industries to State Government Organisations/Joint Sector/ Assisted Sector/Voluntary Organisations/ Cooperatives etc.

As per the existing policy, beer units can be set only in centrally declared category A or B backward areas.

As per available information, the State Government of Punjab, in its new Industrial Policy, recognises agro-based industries as a thrust area and provides special package of incensitives. The whole State, including backward districts and border areas of Punjab, is eligible for such investment incentives, sales tax exemption/deferment and generator set subsidy etc. subject to certain conditions.

Scheme for fruit and vegetable processing sector in Maharashtra

572. MISS SAROJ KHAPARDE: Will the Minister of FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are implementing any scheme for strengthening backward linkages between the farmers and the processors in the fruit and vegetable processing sector in Maharashtra;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether the State Government is also playing any role in this regard;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) what are the other measures being taken by Government to promote fruit and vegetable processing sector in Maharashtra?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRIES (SHRI DILIP KUMAR RAY): (a) and (b) The Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing a Plan scheme for strengthening of backward linkages which seeks to provide assistance in the form of re-imbursement to the extent of 5% of total purchases of raw fruits and vegetables made by the processor in a given year, Limited to Rs. 10 lakhs.

The processing company seeking such assistance would be required to supply high quality seeds, fertilisers, pesticides and technology, and also do other extension work for the contracted farmers/growers, who shall not be less than 25 in number.

The processing company/unit, which may be in private sector, assisted sector, joint sector, cooperative sector or a NGO, can avail such assistance for a maximum period of 3 years.

This scheme is being implemented all over the country including the State of Maharashtra.

(c) and (d) State Governments have designated nodal agencies for the development of food processing industries in their respective states. These agencies, inter-alia, monitor the schemes for strengthening of backward linkages.

(e) The Ministry of Food Processing Industries is implementing various development plan schemes which provide assistance for setting up of fruit & vegetable based industries, including their expansion and upgradation, in various States including Maharashtra. However, none of these developmental plan schemes in state specific.

Invention of a Solar Energy Device by An "Indo-Canadian Engineer"

573. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item appeared in "The Hindustan Times" dated 22nd December, 1996 to the effect